

## **Assessor Explains Nuts & Bolts of State Motor Vehicle Taxes**

From the Desk of John J. Chaponis, Assessor, Town of Colchester.

Most Connecticut residents are already aware that the state law requires municipalities to tax their automobiles. However, it is important for taxpayers to be aware of how the system works, what period the bill actually covers, and how to stop getting taxed once the vehicle has been sold, stolen, totaled, or registered in another state because of relocation.

Motor vehicles bills that were mailed in June of 2010, and became due July 1, 2010, are taxing owners for the twelve-month period of October 1, 2009 until September 30, 2010. This is known as the October 1, 2009 Grand List.

If a person sells their vehicle during this period, they MAY be entitled to a “pro-rated” bill. In order to have a bill pro-rated you must first file documentation satisfactory to the Assessor concerning the sale, total damage, theft, or removal of the vehicle. Satisfactory documentation may vary from town to town but most commonly consists of: A copy of the “return plate receipt” from the Department of Motor Vehicles (this is mandatory). The second proof will be the bill of sale, letter from your insurance company showing that the vehicle was totaled and paid off, a copy of your new registration from the new state in which you reside, or a copy of the police report showing the vehicle was stolen. In the event it was stolen, you can still obtain a “return plate receipt” from DMV by reporting the plates “lost or stolen”.

Assessors pro-rations are inspected by the town auditors, we are required to obtain these proofs and attached them to each correction. There are no negotiations or special circumstances so it is imperative that taxpayers are aware of what documentation is required and save copies.

When you sell a vehicle, you must keep a copy of the bill of sale for yourself and there is no reason to wait for the July tax bill to bring your proof into the Assessor's Office. If you sell your vehicle in February, turn in you plates and bring in the proofs right away. Our office will pro-rate your bill before it is mailed to you in June. Furthermore, if you wait too long to turn in the plates, you may get billed for an additional year as registrations are valid for two years and DMV will report the active registration to the Assessor even though your vehicle has been sold, stolen or registered in another state.

Please be certain that when you do turn in your proofs you get a receipt from the Assessor's Office showing that you provided the documentation in a timely manner. Sec. 12-71c(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that you must provide these proofs within twenty-seven months of the Grand List date. “Failure to file such claim and documentation.....shall constitute a waiver of your right to such property tax credit”. In other words, you can get stuck paying for a bill in full, with interest, when it could have been reduced or deleted had you filed the proper documentation timely.

If you move to another town or state, make sure you remember to notify the Assessor of your new address immediately. Many times tax bills will be returned to the town as the postal forward order has run out and if the plates were not returned someone could end up with two years of delinquent bills that are past the legal date for an Assessor to give a credit. Failure to notify your old residence town assessor of your new address could end up costing you additional monies two years later with no recourse for an adjustment because the time limit for pro-rations will have expired.

If you sell your vehicle and put your old plates on a newly acquired vehicle your job is a simple one. Just pay the bill that comes out in July, which is for the old vehicle that was sold some months ago. Then, six months later, you will receive a "supplemental bill". This is a bill for any new/replacement vehicle that was purchased after October 1<sup>st</sup> Grand List and prior to the next October 1<sup>st</sup> Grand List.

Supplemental bills on the October 1, 2009 Grand List will be mailed out in December of 2010 and will be due January 1, 2011.

If you transferred your plates and paid your July bill on the old vehicle, your supplemental bill will automatically deduct any over payment on the old vehicle. This actually prints right on the bill so that you will see you received the proper credit. Transferring plates is the simplest way for taxpayers and requires the least attention.

Over the years, I have seen several taxpayers have to pay for one to four years of motor vehicle bills, plus interest, that they could have avoided had they provided the documentation in a timely manner as required by state statute. Most of these situations occurred because the taxpayer moved to a new town or state. Please remember the town is also a creditor and must be notified of your new address just like credit card and phone companies. Please turn those plates in right away to DMV and to keep a copy of your bill of sale because you need it.

If you need a blank DMV "bill of sale" form, please feel free to contact our office at (860) 537-7205 and we can send one to your attention.

Lastly, if you reside in Connecticut and you own a vehicle you should receive a bill in July annually. If you do not, you must call your local Assessor's Office and inquire as to why you did not receive your bill. Failure to receive a bill does not negate the tax or the interest. If your bill was accidentally coded wrong at DMV and sent to another town in error, you may not become aware that you have delinquent taxes and interest until you try to renew your registration or buy a new vehicle. Even if this error is corrected and the bill gets moved to the correct town, you will still owe interest and in the event the vehicle has been sold, it may be too late to apply for a credit or pro-rated bill.

Should you have any questions concerning your motor vehicle bills, please do not hesitate to contact our office at (860) 537-7205.